

Message Text

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LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, MPOL, SW
SUBJECT: LUNCH WITH DEFENSE MINISTER

1. FEBRUARY 22 I HAD LUNCH WITH ERIC KRONMARK, MINISTER OF DEFENSE, CONTINUING THE SERIES OF LUNCHESES WITH MINISTERS OF THE NEW FALLDIN GOVERNMENT. AS ON THE OTHER OCCASIONS, MY MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO BUILD A GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP AND TO SHOW US INTEREST IN COOPERATING WITH THE NEW NON-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT. KRONMARK, WHO IS FROM THE MODERATE (CONSERVATIVE) PARTY, IS AN INTELLIGENT MAN WHO SEEMS TO HAVE ACQUIRED A GOOD GRASP OF HIS JOB IN A RELATIVELY SHORT TIME. HE SPOKE IN FIRM TONES ABOUT SWEDEN'S FULL COMMITMENT TO A STRONG DEFENSE POSTURE, AND SAID HE EXPECTED PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THIS POSITION TO CONTINUE.

2. ON SWEDEN'S GENERAL MILITARY POSTURE, KRONMARK SAID PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR CURRENT LEVELS OF SPENDING AND FOR THE SWEDISH DEFENSE SYSTEM BASED ON A CONSCRIPT ARMY WAS HOLDING FIRM. WHILE THIS COMMITMENT WAS LESS ON THE PART OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO GREW UP SINCE WORLD WAR II, KRONMARK SAID THERE WAS NO DOUBT THAT DEVOTION TO NON-ALIGNMENT AND TO ITS NECESSARY CONCOMITANT, A CREDIBLE DEFENSE, WOULD
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REMAIN A CONSTANT IN SWEDISH LIFE.

3. ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE THREE-PARTY COALITION GOVERNMENT, KRONMARK SAID THAT DESPITE SOME EARLY PROBLEMS THE SYSTEM WAS NOW WORKING RATHER WELL. IN THE DEFENSE AREA, THERE WERE STILL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE THREE PARTIES, HOWEVER. THIS LED TO DISCUSSION OF INTER-SERVICE

RIVALRIES, AND KRONMARK DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH "THE AIRCRAFT PROBLEM," WHICH HIS AIDE, ADMIRAL ARVAS, DESCRIBED WITH KRONMARK'S AGREEMENT AS THE ONLY GENUINELY CONTENTIOUS ISSUE ON THE MILITARY SCENE. THE DECISION AS TO WHETHER TO SPEND THE NECESSARY MONEY ON THE B3LA ATTACK PLANE--WHICH WILL NOW BE MADE THIS FALL, AS THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE--IS OBVIOUSLY A DIFFICULT ONE. KRONMARK SAID THERE WAS NO DOUBT IN HIS MIND THE AIRCRAFT ITSELF WAS NEEDED, IN ADDITION TO IT UTILITY IN SUPPORTING THE SWEDISH AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY; AND HE ADDED THAT THE WEST IN ITS OWN INTEREST SHOULD SUPPORT SWEDEN'S EFFORT TO PRESERVE HER CAPACITY TO PRODUCE MODERN MILITARY AIRCRAFT.

4. FURTHER ON BUDGETARY MATTERS, KRONMARK TOLD ME THAT THE NEW MILITARY BUDGET WOULD BE PRESENTED BY PRIME MINISTER FALLDIN (THUS SHOWING THREE-PARTY UNITY) ON MARCH 10, WITH A FULL BRIEFING FOR MILATTS ON MARCH 11.

5. KRONMARK ALSO SAID HE HAD AN INVITATION FROM THE CHICAGO COUNCIL ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO SPEAK THERE IN SEPTEMBER, ALTHOUGH HE HAD NOT YET MADE ANY COMMITMENT; IF HE DID NOT GO IN SEPTEMBER, HE WOULD LIKE VERY MUCH TO VISIT THE US NEXT YEAR, PERHAPS IN THE SPRING.

6. PERSONAL: KRONMARK SEEMS ABLE AND ON TOP OF HIS JOB, AS BEST ONE CAN JUDGE AT THIS RELATIVELY EARLY DATE. HIS ENGLISH IS LIMITED: HE UNDERSTANDS WELL BUT RELIED ON ADMIRAL ARVAS FOR INTERPRETATION WHEN HE HAD ANYTHING SUBSTANTIVE TO SAY. HE DOES SEEM TO ME
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FRIENDLY TO THE US AND A MAN WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO WORK WITH RATHER EASILY.
SMITH

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NNN

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